U.S. FORENSIC SCIENTIST HONORED FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Wildlife forensic scientist Bonnie Yates, who retired last fall after 20 years of service with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), has received the 2013 Clark R. Bavin Law Enforcement Award from the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) and Species Survival Network (SSN) in recognition of her outstanding contributions to global wildlife protection.

Honors for Yates and nine other award recipients from around the world were announced at a March 5, 2013, ceremony at the 16th Conference of Parties (CoP) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Bangkok, Thailand.

The Bavin Award recognizes accomplishments in combating wildlife crime involving species protected under the CITES treaty and is presented at each CoP to deserving recipients working in the field of wildlife law enforcement. The award is named after Clark R. Bavin (as is OLE's Clark R. Bavin National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon, where Yates spent her Service career). As chief of Service Law Enforcement from 1972 through 1990, Bavin launched and guided U.S. efforts to stem global wildlife trafficking.

"We're proud to see Bonnie Yates singled out for key contributions to global wildlife conservation," said OLE Chief William Woody. "Her work, and that of her colleagues at the Lab, has been critical to our success in investigating and exposing black market wildlife trade. CITES doesn't mean much without people like Bonnie and the other award recipients working to enforce it in the real world."

Yates was one of a handful of pioneers at OLE's Foresnics Laboratory who, in the early 1990s, essentially invented the science of wildlife forensics. A classically trained morphologist, she joined the Laboratory staff in 1992 to serve as its expert in identifying the mammal species represented in wildlife parts or products based on her knowledge of the form and structure of this group of animals. She was one of the first morphologists to apply the science in a forensic setting and is a globally recognized expert in animal hair identification.

In selecting Yates for the Bavin Award, the AWI and SSN honored her for developing new species identification techniques for use in fighting wildlife trafficking – techniques that helped improve protections for Tibetan antelopes, spotted cats, elephants, and other species. The Institute also recognized Yates for her work analyzing wildlife crime evidence (work that involved more than 2,000 cases and nearly 7,000 evidence items) and for the species identification consultations that she provided Service wildlife inspectors on almost a daily basis.

In addition to answering countless questions, Yates improved the forensic support available to these officers by developing and implementing a provisional digital photo ID program to help inspectors determine whether "probable cause" exists for detaining a wildlife shipment for further investigation. She also worked to build the Laboratory's reference collection of mammal

skeletons, skins and mounted hairs – a collection that continues to support morphological identifications of wildlife parts and products moving in the illegal trade.

During her career, Yates taught species identification methods to hundreds of new Service special agents and wildlife inspectors. She also provided numerous workshops on animal hair identification at professional meetings of biologists and forensic scientists.

This year's Bavin Award recipients also include individual enforcement officers or groups from eight other countries (Chad, China, Indonesia, India, Italy, Kenya, Thailand, and Trinidad & Tobago) and from INTERPOL's Environmental Crime Programme. Those recognized included 13 Kenya Wildlife Service rangers who died in the line of duty and six rangers gunned down by poachers last fall during morning prayer at Zakouma National Park in Chad.

For more information, contact Sandra Cleva, Office of Law Enforcement, 703-358-1949.

###